WPSBA 2020 State Priorities

Foundation Aid
WPSBA supports the review of the Foundation Aid formula and calls for full funding of Foundation Aid. The formula should be updated with current demographic and cost data. Westchester and Putnam should be grouped with NYC/Long Island for purposes of regional cost calculations to more accurately reflect the higher expenses of operating in the NYC suburbs. WPSBA opposes the Executive Budget proposal to dissolve 10 expense-based aids into Foundation Aid, as this will significantly reduce the transparency and predictability of school aid.

Funding Obstacles
WPSBA opposes Executive Budget proposals to limit building and transportation aid, and to eliminate the 18.42% State share for residential placements for severely impacted special needs students. The proposal to change the limits of the STAR Exemption program will create an additional burden for taxpayers. WPSBA calls for amendments to the tax levy cap calculation to start with a minimum 2% growth factor; not permit negative tax levies; allow for enrollment growth; and account for the effects of PILOTs, reserves, and transfer to capital. To highlight the issue of mandates on school districts, any education-related state bills should be required to include a cost to local school districts.

Special Act School Districts
WPSBA supports the Special Act School Districts in their call for tuition rate setting that ensure rates are set before the school year begins and accounts for changes in student population and rising costs. Classifying safety and security as a direct care cost will permit Special Act schools the flexibility to ensure needed safety and facility upgrades. The authority to establish a 4% unappropriated reserve fund will improve the ability of Special Act public schools to plan ahead.

Local Decision-Making
Districts that choose to offer prekindergarten programs require an ongoing source of inflation-adjusted funding. WPSBA calls for schools designated as polling places to be granted the same “right of refusal” as other public buildings. Time off for voting provisions should be revised to reflect that the end of the school day permits more than three hours for faculty and staff to vote after work.

Mental Health and Student Safety
The increasing social-emotional and mental health needs of our students require additional resources. WPSBA also calls for additional funding for districts to ensure the safety of our schools through security upgrades, staffing, professional development, and training.